

The BRONZE BELL

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SYNOPSIS.

David Amber, starting for a duck-shoot on a young lady's estate, has been disconcerted by the sudden appearance in the road of a burly Hindu. He declares he is a Maharaja. The Maharaja, who is a member of the Rajput caste, is a man of high rank and pressing a mysterious little bronze bell. The Maharaja, who is a member of the Rajput caste, is a man of high rank and pressing a mysterious little bronze bell. The Maharaja, who is a member of the Rajput caste, is a man of high rank and pressing a mysterious little bronze bell.

CHAPTER IX. (Continued).

As Amber left the room Labertouche extinguished the lamp, shut and locked the door, and followed, catching Amber by the arm and guiding him through pitch darkness to the head of the stairs. "Don't talk," he whispered; "trust me. They descended an interminable flight of steps, passed down a long, echoing corridor, and again descended. From the foot of the second flight Labertouche shunted Amber round through what seemed a veritable maze of passages—in which, however, he was evidently at home. At length: "Now go ahead!" was breathed in Amber's ear and at the same time his arm was released.

He obeyed blindly, stumbling down a reeking corridor, and in a minute more, to his utter relief, was in the open air of the bazar. Blinking with the abrupt transition from absolute night to garish light, he skulked in the shadow of the doorway, waiting. Beneath his gaze Calcutta paraded its congress of peoples—a comprehensive collection of specimens of every tribe in Hindustan and of nearly every other race in the world besides.

Like a fat, tawdry moth in his garments of soiled pink, a babu loitered past, with never a sidelong glance for the loiterer in the shadow of the doorway; and the latter seemed himself absorbed in the family of Eurasians who were ably squabbling with the keeper of vegetable stall adjacent. But presently he wearied of their noise, yawned, thrust both hands deep in his pockets and stumbled away. The bazar accepted him as a brother, unquestioning, and he picked his way through it with an ease that argued nothing but absolute familiarity with his surroundings. But always you may be sure, he had the gleam of pink satin in the corner of his eye.

In time broad Machua bazar street received them—Pink Satin and the mailman out for a night of it. And now Pink Satin began to stroll more sedately, manifesting a livelier interest in the sights of the wayside. Amber's impatience—for he guessed that they neared the goldsmith's stall—increased prodigiously.

Without warning, Pink Satin pulled up, extracted from the recesses of his costume a long, black and vindictive-looking native cigar, and lighted it, thoughtfully exhaling the smoke through his nose while he stared covetously at the display of a slipper-merchant whose stand was over across from the stall of a goldsmith.

With true oriental deliberation Pink Satin finally made up his mind to move on; and Amber lurched heavily into the premises occupied by one Dholu Bakhsh, a goldsmith.

A customer, a slim, handsome Malay youth, for the moment held the attention of the proprietor. The two were haggling with characteristic enjoyment over a transaction which seemed to involve less than twenty rupees. Amber waited, knowing that patience must be his portion until the bargain should be struck. Dholu Bakhsh himself, a lean, sharp-featured Maharatta gray with age, appraised with a single look the new customer, and returned his interest to the Malay. But Amber garnered from that glance a sensation of recognition. He wondered dimly, why; could the goldsmith have been warned of his coming?

Two or three more putative customers idled into the shop. Beyond its threshold the stream of native life rolled on, ceaselessly fluent; a pageant of the middle ages had been no more fantastic and unreal to western eyes. Now and again a wayfarer paused, his interest attracted by the goldsmith's rush of business.

Unexpectedly the proprietor made a substantial concession. Money passed upon the instant, sealing the bargain. The Malay rose to go. Dholu Bakhsh lifted a stony stare to Amber.

"Your pleasure, sahib?" he inquired, with a thinly-veiled sneer. What need to show deference to a down-at-the-

heel sailor from the port? "I want money—I want to borrow," said Amber promptly. "On your word, sahib?" "On security."

"What manner of security can you offer?" "A ring—an emerald ring."

Dholu Bakhsh shrugged. His eyes shifted from Amber to the encircling faces of the bystanders. "I am a poor man," he whined. "How should I have money to lend? Come to me on the morrow; then mayhap I may have a few rupees. Tonight I have neither cash nor time."

The hint was lost upon Amber. "A stone of price—" he persisted. With a disturbed and apprehensive look, the money-lender roared. "Come, then," he grumbled, "if you must—"

A voice cried out behind Amber—"Heh!"—more a squeal than a cry. Intuitively, as at a signal of danger, he leaped aside. Simultaneously something like a beam of light sped past his head. The goldsmith uttered one dreadful, choking scream, and went to his knees. For as many as three seconds he swayed back and forth, his features terribly contorted, his thin old hands plucking at the handle of a broad-bladed dagger which had transfixed his throat. Then he tumbled forward on his face, kicking.

There followed a single instant of suspense and horror, then a mad rush of feet as the street stampeded into the shop. Voices clamored to the skies. Somehow the lights went out.

Amber started to fight his way out. As he struggled on, making little headway through the press, a hand grasped his arm and drew him another way.

"Make haste, hazoor!" cried the owner of the hand, in Hindustani. "Make haste, lest they seek to fasten this crime upon your head."

CHAPTER X.

Maharana of Khandawar.

Both hand and voice might well have been Labertouche's; Amber believed they were. And the darkness rendered visual identification impossible. No shadow of doubt troubled him as he yielded to the urgent hand, and permitted himself to be dragged, more than led, through the reeking, milling mob, whose numbers seemed each instant augmented. He had thought, dully, to find it a difficult matter to worm through and escape, but somehow his guide seemed to have little trouble.

Ever since that knife had flown past his cheek, his instinct of self-preservation had been dominated by a serene confidence that Pink Satin was at hand to steer him in safety away from the brawl. He thanked his stars for Labertouche—for the hand that clasped his arm and the voice that spoke guardedly in his ear.

And then, by the light of the street, he discovered that his gratitude had been premature and misplaced. His guide had fallen a pace behind and was shouldering him along with almost frantic energy; but a glance aside showed Amber, in Labertouche's stead, a chunky little Gurkha in the fatigues of his regiment of the British army of India. Pink Satin was nowhere in sight, and it was immediately apparent that an attempt to find him among the teeming hundreds before the goldsmith's stall would be as futile as foolhardy—if not fatal. Yet Amber's impulse was to wait, and he faltered—something which seemed to exasperate the Gurkha, who fairly danced with excitement and impatience.

"Hasten, hazoor!" he cried. "Is this a time to loiter? Hasten ere they charge you with this spilling of blood. The gods lend wings to our feet this night!"

"But who are you?" demanded Amber.

"What matter is that? Is it not enough that I am here and well disposed toward you, that I risk my skin to save yours?" He cannoned suddenly against Amber, shunting him unconsciously out of the bazar road and into a narrow black alley.

Simultaneously Amber heard a cry go up, shrill above the clamor of the mob, screaming that a white sailor had knifed the goldsmith. And he turned pale beneath his tan.

"You hear, hazoor? They are naming you to the police-wallahs. Come!" "You're right," Amber fell into a long, free stride that threatened quickly to distance the Gurkha's short, sturdy legs. "Yet why do you take this trouble for me?"

"Why ask?" panted the Gurkha. "Did I not stand behind you and see that you did not throw the knife? Am I a dog to stand by and see an innocent man yoked to a crime?" He laughed shortly. "Am I a fool to forget how great is the generosity of kings? This way, hazoor!"

"Why call me king?" Amber hurried a heap of offal and picked up his pace again. "Yet you will find me generous, though but a sahib."

"The sahibs are very generous." Again the Gurkha laughed briefly and unpleasantly. "But this is no time for words. Save your breath, for now we must run."

He broke into a springy lope, his chin up, elbows in and chest distended, his quick small feet slopping re-

gardlessly through the viscous mud of the unpaved byway.

By now the voice of the chase had subsided to a dull and distant muttering far behind them, and the way was clear. Beyond its age-old, ineradicable atmosphere of secret infamy there was nothing threatening in the aspect of the neighborhood. And the Gurkha pulled up, breathing like a wind-broken horse.

"Easily, hazoor!" he gasped. "There is time for rest."

Willingly Amber dropped into a wavering stride, so nearly exhausted that his legs shook under him, and he reeled drunkenly; and, fighting for breath, they stumbled on, side by side, in the shadow of the overhanging walls, until as they neared a corner the Gurkha halted Amber with an imperative gesture.

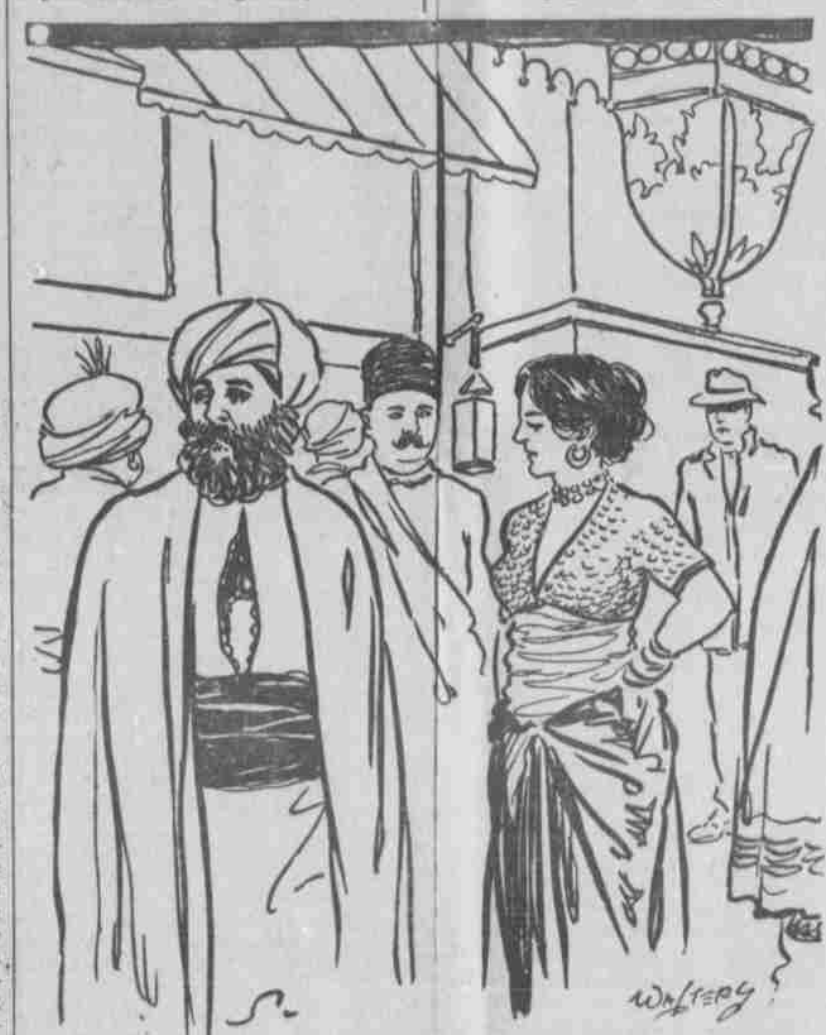
"The police, sahib, the police!" he breathed, with an expressive sweep of his hand toward the cross street. "Let us wait here till they pass." And in evident panic he crowded Amber into the deep and gloomy recess afforded by a door overhung by a balcony.

Taken off his guard, but with growing doubt, Amber was on the point of remonstrating. Why should the police concern themselves with peaceful wayfarers? They could not yet have heard of the crime in the Bazar, miles distant. But as he opened his lips he heard the latch click behind him, and before he could lift a finger the Gurkha had flung himself, bodily upon him, fairly lifting the American across the threshold.

They went down together, the Gurkha on top. And the door crashed to with a rattling of bolts, leaving Amber on his back, in total darkness, betrayed, lost, and alone with his enemies.

Amber went temporarily mad with rage. He was no stranger to fear—no man with an imagination; but for the time being he was utterly foolhardy. He forgot his exhaustion, forgot the hopelessness of his plight, forgot everything save his insatiable thirst for vengeance. He was, in our homely idiom, fighting mad.

One instant overpowered by and supine beneath the Gurkha, the next



A Comprehensive Collection of Specimens of Every Tribe.

he had flung the man off and bounded to his feet. There was the automatic pistol in his coat pocket, but he, conscious that many hands were reaching out in the darkness to drag him down again, found no time to draw it. He seemed to feel the presence of the nearest antagonist, whom he could by no means see; for he struck out with both bare, clenched fists, one after the other, with his weight behind each, and both blows landed. The room rang with the sounds of the struggle, the shuffle, thud, and scrape of feet both booted and bare, the hoarse, harsh breathing of the combatants, their groans, their whispers, their low, tense cries.

And abruptly it was over. He was borne down by sheer weight of numbers. Though he fought with the insanity of despair they were too many for him. He went a second time to the floor, beneath a dozen half-nude bodies. Below him lay another, with an arm encircling his throat, the elbow beneath his chin compressing his windpipe. Powerless to move hand or foot, he gave up. . . . and wondered dully why it was that a knife had not been slipped between his ribs—between the fifth and sixth—or in his back, beneath the left shoulder blade, and why his gullet remained unslit.

Gradually it was forced upon him that his captors meant him no bodily harm, for the present at least. His wrath subsided and gave place to curiosity while he rested, regaining his wind, and the natives squirmed away from him, leaving one man kneeling upon his chest and four others each pinning a limb.

There followed a wait, while some several persons indulged in a whispered confabulation at a distance from him too great for their words to be articulate. Then came a croaking

laugh out of the darkness and words intended for his ear.

"By Mahang Shah! but my lord doth fight like a Rajput!" Amber caught his breath and exploded. "Half a chance, you damned thugs, and I'll show you how an American can fight!"

But he had spoken in English, and his hearers gathered the import of his words only from his tone, apparently. He who had addressed him laughed apologetically.

"It was a gallant fight," he commented, "but like all good things hath had its end. My lord is overcome. Is my lord still minded for battle or for peace? Dare I, his servant, give orders for his release, or—"

Here Amber interrupted, stung by the bitter irony, he told the speaker in fluent Hindustani Hindustani precisely what he might expect if his "lord" ever got the shadow of a chance to lay hands upon him.

The grim cackling laugh followed his words, a mocking echo, and was his only answer. But for all his defiance, he presently heard orders issued to take him up and bear him to another chamber.

Unexpectedly he was let down upon the floor and released. Bare feet scurried away in the darkness and a door closed with a resounding bang. He was alone, for all he could say to the contrary—alone and unarmed. He was more; he was astonished; he had not been alarmed.

A flood of lamplight leaped through some opening behind him and showed him his shadow, long and gigantic upon the floor of earth and a wall of stone. He wheeled about, alert as a cat; and the sight of his pistol hung ready between the eyes of one who stood at ease, with folded arms, in an open doorway. Over his shoulder was visible the bare brown poll of an attendant whose lank brown arm held aloft the lamp.

One does not shoot down in cold blood a man who makes no aggressive move, and he who stood in the doorway endured impassively the mute threat of the pistol. Above its sight his eyes met Amber's with a level and unwavering glance, shining out of a

solite sincerity. "I trust I make my meaning plain?"

"Most clear, hazoor." The other showed his teeth in an appreciative smile. "And yet—with an expressive outward movement of both hands—'what is the need of all this?'"

"What?" Amber choked with resentment. "What was the need of setting your thugs upon me—of kidnapping me?"

"That, my lord, was an error of judgment on the part of one who shall pay for it full measure. I trust you were not rudely treated."

"I'd like to know what in blazes you call it," snapped Amber. "I'm dogged by your spies—heaven knows why!—lured to this place, butted



Every Inch of His Pose Bespoke Power, Position and Habit of Authority.

bodily into the arms of a gang of ruffians to be manhandled, and finally locked up in a dark cell. I don't suppose you've got the nerve to call that courteous treatment."

He had an advantage, and knowing it, was pushing it to the limit; for all his nonchalance the black man was not unconscious of the pistol; his eye never forgot it. And Amber's eyes left his not an instant. Despite that the fellow's next move was a distinct surprise.

Suddenly and with superb grace, he stepped forward and dropped to one knee at Amber's feet, bowing his head and offering the hilt of his sword to the American.

"My lord," he said swiftly in Hindustani, "if I have misjudged thee, if I have earned thy displeasure, upon my head be it. See, I give my life into thy hands; but a little quiver of thy forefinger and I am as dust. . . . An ill report of thee was brought to me, and I did err in crediting it. It is true that I set this trap for thee; but see, my lord! though I did so, it was with no evil intent. I thought but to make sure of thee and bid thee welcome, as a faithful steward should, to thy motherland. . . . Maha Rao Rana, Har Dyal Rutton Bahadur, heaven-born, king of kings, chosen of the Voice, cherished of the Eye, beloved of the Heart, bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of the Body, guardian of the Gateway of Swords! . . . I, thy servant, Salig Singh, bid thee welcome to Bharuta!"

Sonorous and not unpleasing, his voice trembled with intense and unquestionable earnestness; and when it ceased he remained motionless in his attitude of humility. Amber, hardly able to credit his hearing, stared down at the man stupidly, his head awheel with curiously commingled sensations of amazement and enlightenment. Presently he laughed shortly.

"Get up," he said; "get up and stand over there by the wall and don't be a silly ass."

"Hazoor!" There was reproach in Salig Singh's accents; but he obeyed, rising and retreating to the further wall there to hold himself in attention.

"Now see here," began Amber, designedly continuing his half of the conversation in English—far too much misunderstanding had already been brought about by his too-ready familiarity with Urdu. He paused a little to collect his thoughts, then resumed: "Now see here, you're Salig Singh, maharana of Khandawar?" This much he recalled from his conversation with Labertouche a couple of hours gone.

"Hazoor, why dost thou need ask? Thou dost know." The Rajput, on his part, steadfastly refused to return to English.

"But you are, aren't you?"

"By thy favor, it is even so."

"And you think I'm Rutton—Har Dyal Rutton, as you call him, the former maharana who abdicated in your favor?"

The Rajput shrugged expressively, an angry light in his dark, bold eyes. "It phases my lord to jest," he complained; "but am I a child, to be played with?"

"I'm not joking, Salig Singh, and this business is no joke at all. What I'm trying to drive into your head is the fact that you've made the mistake of your life. I'm not Rutton and I'm nothing like Rutton; I am an American citizen and—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Threw Cream Away. She was a city bride, who had never before taken a hand in housekeeping and knew but little about things in the kitchen. A few mornings ago she got after the milkman.

"What's the matter with your milk?" she said, with great vehemence.

"I don't know," he replied. "What do you find wrong with it?"

"Well," she said, "every morning it is covered with a nasty yellow scum."

"And what do you do with the scum?"

"Why, I skim it off, of course, and throw it in the garbage can."—Farmers' Guide.

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CARING FOR TUBERCULOSIS

Thirty-Nine State and 114 Local Sanatoria Provided, but These Are Only a Beginning.

In spite of the fact that state sanatoria and hospitals for tuberculosis have been established in 31 states, and 114 municipal or county hospitals in 26 states, vastly more public provision is needed to stamp out consumption, says the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis. Nearly every state east of the Mississippi river has provided a state sanatorium, and west of the Mississippi river, state sanatoria have been established in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Oregon. There are 38 sanatoria provided by these states. Massachusetts having four, Connecticut and Pennsylvania three and Texas two. Including special pavilions and almshouses, there are 114 municipal or county hospitals for the care of tuberculosis patients.

Apart from these institutions, however, and a few special pavilions at prisons, hospitals for the insane, and some other public institutions, a grand total of hardly 300, the institutional care of the consumptive is left to private philanthropy.

HE KNOWS THEY ARE NOT.



Mrs. Benham—"The paper tells about a man who stole a head of lettuce and then went back and got another, being arrested on the second trip. Benham—I'll bet you can't make that fellow believe that two heads are better than one."

Just So.

"Why do they call a bell boy in a hotel 'Buttons'?" "Because he's always off when you need him most, I guess."

WRONG SORT

Perhaps Plain Old Meat, Potatoes and Bread May Be Against You for a Time.

A change to the right kind of food can lift one from a sick bed. A lady in Widen, Ill., says:

"Last spring I became bed-fast with severe stomach troubles accompanied by sick headache. I got worse and worse until I became so low I could scarcely retain any food at all, although I tried about every kind."

"I had become completely discouraged, and given up all hope, and thought I was doomed to starve to death, until one day my husband, trying to find something I could retain, brought home some Grape-Nuts."

"To my surprise the food agreed with me, digested perfectly and without distress. I began to gain strength at once. My flesh (which had been flabby), grew firmer, my health improved in every way and every day, and in a very few weeks I gained 30 pounds in weight."

"I liked Grape-Nuts so well that for four months I ate no other food, and always felt as well satisfied after eating as if I had sat down to a fine banquet."

"I had no return of the miserable sick stomach nor of the headaches, that I used to have when I ate other food. I am now a well woman, doing all my own work again, and feel that life is worth living."

"Grape-Nuts food has been a God-send to my family; it surely saved my life; and my two little boys have thriven on it wonderfully." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason." Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.